

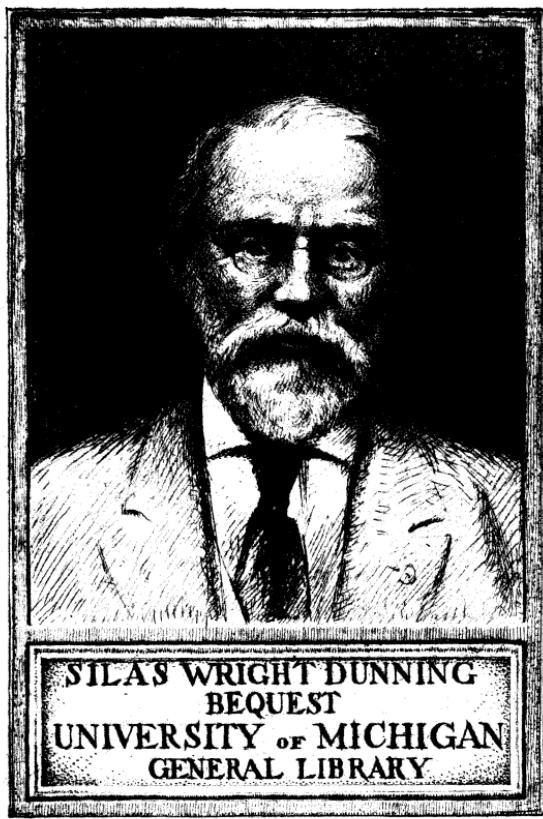
THE JOURNAL OF THE POLYNESIAN SOCIETY - VOL. IX. - 1900

GN

P 70

B

851,267



SILAS WRIGHT DUNNING
BEQUEST
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
GENERAL LIBRARY

LIBRARY BOOK NO. 1430

GN
2
P78

BENZINGER LIBRARY
EAST QUADRANGLE

JOURNAL

OF THE

POLYNESIAN SOCIETY

CONTAINING

THE TRANSACTIONS AND PROCEEDINGS
OF THE SOCIETY.

VOL. IX.

1900.



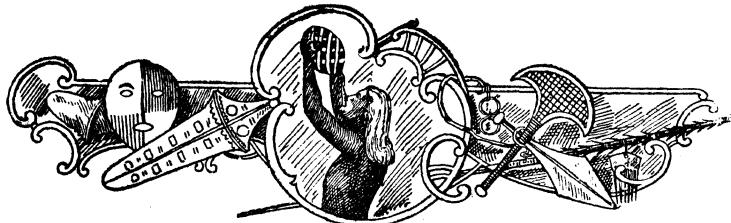
WELLINGTON, N.Z.:

PRINTED FOR THE SOCIETY BY WHITCOMBE AND TOMBS LIMITED, LAMBTON QUAY.

AGENT FOR AMERICA:

REV. S. D. PEET, EDITOR OF "THE AMERICAN ANTIQUARY," CHICAGO.

1900.



“THE CREATION SONG” OF HAWAII.

BY EDWARD TREGEAR.

MONG the most treasured volumes on my shelves is a book sent to me years ago by His late Majesty Kalakaua, King of Hawaii—himself the author of the work. It was a royal task, for it was the effort to preserve, as printed literature alone can by dispersion preserve, the fast-fading legends embodying the cosmogony and mythology of his people as taught in ancient days, and also pedigrees of high chiefs as sung by the priests of the Heraldic College. But no translation into any European language accompanied the book. Many an hour I pored over the old verses, catching strange glimpses of all sorts of secrets and of mysterious hints as to hidden things that in other island lore were full of broken lights and half-revealed promises. However, every Polynesian student knows how difficult it is, even for a scholar accomplished in the particular dialect under consideration, to fully understand the obsolete speech and mystical allusions in which the old poetry of the Pacific islands abounds. No Hawaiian pundit, no Fornander or Lorrin Andrews was at hand from whom help could be entreated, so, fearing to utterly fall where much more skilful men might stumble, I have abstained from calling attention to the poems, except on one occasion. Light has come from another direction through the issue by Liliuokalani, ex-Queen of Hawaii (and patron of the Polynesian Society) of a translation* of one of the principal poems in the King's book. It is evident, on careful perusal, that even the great scholarship of the authoress has failed to convey to the reader the meaning intended in the original

* NOTE.—*The Creation of the World*: Lee & Shepard, Boston, U.S.A., 1897.

words, but this is assuredly inevitable from the nature of the subject. It would be perhaps impossible to make a modern Hawaiian understand without long explanation what was meant by allusions whose real significance is hidden under the mist of centuries. It is certainly quite unavailing to attempt to convey to Europeans at once the literal meaning and the metaphorical reference of every allusion unless each line is made the text of a whole sermon of explanatory notes and almost interminable commentary. Therefore we must acquit the writer of any shortcoming in that which purports to be just a fair rendering of one of the most difficult pieces of native poetry possible to translate, and only express deep gratitude for a very successful effort. Although the poem was composed in its present form in about A.D. 1700, it is (like all Polynesian semi-religious chants) merely a mosaic of antique fragments of ancestral learning. It has some added interest to Englishmen because it was sung to Captain Cook when he, being mistaken by the islanders for their god Lono (Rongo) foolishly accepted divine honours, a fact that ultimately wrought his violent death. The translation was published in 1897, but I have hitherto refrained from reviewing it in this journal, as I hoped that some Hawaiian scholar would give us the benefit of his local knowledge by writing a paper on the subject of the poem. That has apparently not been done for members of the Society, so I venture to briefly point out some of the most interesting portions from the Maori field of view.

The song of "The Creation" is an ancient prayer for the dedication of a high chief. It commences:—

"At the time that turned the heat of the earth,
At the time when the heavens turned and changed,
At the time when the light of the sun was subdued
To cause light to break forth,
At the time of the night of Makalii (winter)
Then began the slime which established the earth,
The source of deepest darkness.
Of the depth of darkness, of the depth of darkness,
Of the darkness of the sun, in the depth of night,
It is night,
So was night born."

This gives a reasonably fair vision of the world in the ages before men inhabited the earth, and we pass on to the birth of the uncreated gods:

"Kumulipo was born in the night, a male,
Poele was born in the night, a female.
A coral insect was born, from which was born perforated coral,
The earthworm was born, which gathered earth into mounds,
From it were born worms full of holes.
The starfish was born, whose children were starry,"
&c., &c.

Then follow the names of the shell fish inhabiting the ocean. The above name of Kumulipo, by which in Hawaii is understood "the Creation," would be rendered in Maori *Tu-muri-po*, i.e., "Standing-behind-Night" (or the god Tu-behind-Night) while his wife Poole is in Maori *Po-kere*, "Dark Night." In this part of the song there is a regular metre of long lines used whilst the names of the shell fish created are recited, but it then changes to six-line stanzas, describing the birth of the seaweed and grasses, each weed of the sea having its equivalent and guardian-creature of the forest. The last three lines of each stanza is common to all.

The following is a sample of the verses :—

"Man by Waiololi ; woman by Waiolola,
The Manaea was born and lived in the sea ;
Guarded by the Kalo Manuea that grew in the forest.
A night of flight by noises
Through a channel ; water is life to trees ;
So the gods may enter, but not man."

After sixteen similar stanzas, this part ends with the very curious verse :—

"A husband of gourd, and yet a god,
A tendril strengthened by water and grew
A being, produced by earth and spread,
Made deafening by the swiftness of Time,
Of the Hee that lengthened through the night,
That filled and kept on filling
Of filling, until, filled
To filling, 'tis full,
And supported the earth, which held the heaven
On the wing of Time ; the night is for Kumulipo (creation)
'Tis night."

In the Second Era we are told that "The first child of Powehewhi (Dusky Night) tossed up land for Pouliuli (Darkest Night) "and then the seven waters became calm," so that the creation of fishes began. Here, in the long recital of the names of every known fish, a peculiar thing may be noted, rare in Polynesian poetry, viz., an effort either to rhyme or alliterate the names in each line, e.g.:—

"The Nana was born, the Mana was born in the sea and swam,
The Nake was born, the Make was born in the sea and swam,
The Napa was born, the Nala was born in the sea and swam,
The Pala was born, the Kala was born in the sea and swam,
The Paka was born, the Papa was born in the sea,"
&c., &c.

Then the rhythm alters, and the verse becomes six-lined, as in the recital of the events of the First Era, and with the same method of recording the birth of the things created, viz., that for each ocean dweller there is a tree, or shrub or vine, some forest-growing thing provided. The refrain has also slightly changed.

"Man by Waiololi, woman by Waiolola,
The Pahau was born in the sea ;
Guarded by the Lauhau that grew in the forest.
A night of flight by noises
Through a channel ; salt water is life to fish ;
So the gods may enter, but not man."

The creation of the fishes being continued through sixteen stanzas and an epilogue.

The Third Era is thus announced :—

"He was the man and she the woman ;
The man that was born in the dark age,
And the woman was born in the age of bubbles.
The sea spread, the land spread,
The waters spread, the mountains spread,
The Poniu grew tall with advancing time,
The Haha grew and had nine leaves,
And the Palai (fern) sprout that shot forth leaves of high chiefs,
Brought forth Poelee (Darkness) a man,
Who lived with Pohaha (Bubbles) a woman,
And brought forth generations of Haha (*kalo* or *taro* tops)
The Haha was born."

Lest the ancient poet should be suspected of any intentional rudeness to women in saying that while the man was born in the dark age woman was born in the age of bubbles, it should not be understood that the man spoken of was a human being or the woman either. They were evidently Male and Female Principles, since several Eras have yet to be passed through before we arrive at the birth of the real *genus homo*. After the preamble above we pass on to the creation of insects and then to birds, land-birds first by name, then the birds of ocean.

The general list concluded we get again to the six-line stanzas, and here each of the sea-birds created has a land-bird made to guard it.

"Man by Waiololi, woman by Waiolola,
The Hehe was born and lived on the sea,
Guarded by the Nene that lived in the forest.
A night of flight by noises,
Eggs and Io are life to birds.,
So the gods may enter but not man."

I do not know what is the meaning of Io here; it may mean merely *io* "flesh," (Maori *kiko*) or be a reference to the god Io as "spirit," in the Maori mythology.

The Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Eras appear to have been devoted to the birth of monsters of the deep, and of such small mammals as rats and mice. In the Seventh Era the dog and the bat appear, but are very curiously and mystically alluded to :

" Over the mountains silence reigns—
 The silence of night that has moved away,
 And the silence of night that cometh,
 The silence of night filled with people,
 And the silence of night of dispersing.
 'Tis fearful the steps and narrow trails—
 'Tis fearful the amount eaten and left—
 'Tis fearful the night past and gone ;
 The awful stillness of the night that came—
 The night that went by and brought forth an offspring,
 That offspring a dog—
 A yellow dog, a tiny dog,
 A dog without hair, sent by the gods—
 A dog sent for sacrifice.
 A speckled bird was first sacrificed,
 Else he'd repent for having no hair,
 Else he'd repent for having no covering,
 And go naked on the road to Malama ;
 The easiest path for children,
 From great to small,
 From tall to short.
 He is equal to the blowing breeze,
 The younger brother of the god
 From which sprang the god of the bats—
 The hairy bats.
 Sprang the bat with many claws—
 Sprang the bat and moved away,
 That the rising surf might give it birth.
 'Tis night.

The above is a good example in favour of my previous remark how impossible it is to preserve the sense of the poet in a direct translation, and how necessary a full commentary would be to make the reader understand. I may point out that the allusion to the victim of sacrifice being prejudiced by improper rites, and thus sent "naked on the road to Malama" is probably a reference to the spirit path to heaven, as Malama is, in some Polynesian islands, "the future world." It is the Kingdom of Moonlight, where Hina, the Moon-goddess, reigns, and is full of all innocent delights.

As the Seventh Era ended it was still night, but with the opening of the Eighth Era the day appears, and we are also introduced to some of the gods.

They are called men and women, but are all well known in Polynesia, except Lailai, whose name seems only preserved in Hawaii. (The Maori names are given in brackets).

" Lailai was born a woman,
 Kii [Tiki] was born a man,
 Kane [Tane] a god was born.
 Kanaloa [Tangaroa] was born a god, the great Octopus.
 'Tis day."

"Lailai of the distant night, Lailai the woman," appears as a very shadowy figure, and it seems impossible to understand what power she is intended to represent. She is indeed, to be described best in the line, "This woman was from a race of illusions (myth)"—and is evidently some Cosmic goddess, probably the impersonation of the Eternal Feminine in Nature. With the Eleventh Era commences the prodigious pedigree of the Kings of Hawaii, one that would make the Hebrew priest or Rajpoot noble hide his diminished head, for it includes celestial beings for many generations. It gives in this Era alone about seven hundred and forty generations (about 18,500 years), recording the name of each male with that of his wife, a wonderful monument to the powers of the human memory in recital, if nothing else. The only thing that I have particularly noticed in the names is that there are long sequences of almost similar names, as if there had been surnames or family names in use. Thus we have Kupolele, Kupololo, Kupolili—Polohemo, Polokinau, Polokii—Liilimelau, Liili-leleo, Liililimanu, &c. The Twelfth Era continues the pedigree for another hundred generations or so down to the birth of Wakea (Vatea or Atea) called the first man, and Papa, the first woman. We are here evidently only at the beginning of Maori theology, since with us Rangi (Heaven) answers to Wakea or Atea (Daylight), and both coincide in being the husband of Papa, the Earth Goddess. In the Thirteenth Era we have mention made of Haumea, who may be, perhaps, the Haumia known to the Maoris as a great ogress, the devourer of her own children. She is described in the Hawaiian poem as being wrinkled back and front, aged, with watery eyes, sour-tempered, and "with the breast of a dog." She also married her son and her grandsons, and is evidently looked on as a repulsive person, but was nevertheless a female god, and "as the deep darkness is the greatness of her rank."

In the Fourteenth Era we find that the stars were secured in space and the constellations fixed in their places. This, like the account in Genesis, seems to make the creation of stars a little late, but it may mean that they only became visible at this period. After enumerating by name the principal stars and constellations we have this very interesting passage :

"Strewed the seeds, finest seeds of stars in the heavens;
Strewed fine seed of gods, the sun became a god,
Strewed the seeds from Hina; Lonomaku was formed like jelly,
The food on which subsisted Hinahanaikamalama or Waka,
Sought for by Wakea in the deep blue sea,
In the coral mound, 'mongst rough waves,
Causing Hinaiaa Kamalama to float, a sprig,
'Twas flung into his canoe, she was thereby called Hina the sprig ;
Taken ashore and warmed by the fire."

Here we have a reference to a well known incident in ancient Maori legend. The Hinaiaakamalama mentioned above, would be named (in Maori translation) Hina-ika-a-te-Marama, *i.e.*, Hina, the Fish of the Moon. Hina is, through all Polynesia, connected with the moon, in fact, she is herself the Lunar Goddess, as her name denotes, *mahina* being a common word for "the moon." She is also "the Fish," because of her long swim. In the Maori legend of Rupe we find that Hina threw herself into the sea, disgusted with the unkind behaviour of Maui. She floated for months, and was at last thrown up on the beach. Rescued by two men, and restored to consciousness, she told them that her name was "Stranded log of timber." This explains the above allusion in the Hawaiian poem to "Hina the sprig." (See Grey's Polynesian Mythology, p. 49, edition of 1885).

The last few lines devoted to this Era awake strange thoughts as to the real and esoteric knowledge formerly held by the ancient Hawaiians, and concealed beneath apparently childish fables. They speak of

" the seed of Kaeoeo,
That climbs in space.
The heavens did swing,
The earth does swing
In the starry space."

If we compare this idea with that of the Maori in his cosmogony as presented by White* we shall find the earth described as "floating in space" (*Te Ao e teretere noa ana*). Whatever the ordinary native may have held as his opinion concerning the flat earth over which the sun and stars moved, it is highly probable that some educated minds among them had more scientific and more soundly-based ideas upon the subject, and understood truths long hidden from our own forefathers. It is far from unlikely that the ancient Polynesians, such bold and observant mariners as they were, would deduce from the sinking of lands and vessels behind sea-horizons some notion of the earth's curvature, and of the world's movement as an orb "floating in space."

With the pedigree continued into the Fifteenth Era we get into the full tide of the heroes and demi-gods of Polynesia. If we translate the Hawaiian into Maori we find Tawhito, Ruanuku, Tiki, Mahuika, Maui, &c., but everything relating to New Zealand's hero Maui is so interesting that I make no excuse for quoting the whole long passage.

" Waolena was the man and Mahuie was his wife,
Akalana was the man and Hinaakeahi was his wife,
First Maui was the man and Central Maui was born.
Crouching Maui was born ; Maui with a malo (girdle) was born.

**Note.—Ancient History of the Maori*; by John White, vol. I., Appendix Chart.

The *malo* with which Akalana girded his loins,
From which Hina was pregnant, and by fire brought to life a fowl.
An egg was that child, which Hina brought forth.
Her husband was not a fowl,
Yet a chicken was brought to life..
When the child cooed Hina asked
I have no husband, yet a child is born ;
A brave child is born to Hinaakeahi (Hina of the Fire).
It roused the anger of Kialoa and Kiaakapoko (tall post and short
post).
They are Hina's brothers,
The two posts that guarded the low cave ;
They fought hard with Maui, and were thrown ;
And red water flowed freely from Maui's forehead.
This was the first shower by Maui.
They fetched from the sacred Awa bush of Kane and Kanaloa.
Then came the second shower by Maui.
The third shower was when the elbow of Awa was broken.
The fourth shower was the sacred bamboo of Kane and Kanaloa.
The fifth shower was the edge of the umu (oven).
The sixth shower was the first rise.
Maui sobbed, and inquired for his father.
Hina denied that he had a father ;
That the malo of Kalana was his father.
Then he longed for fish for Hinaakeahi.
Go hence to your father :
'Tis there you will find line and hook ;
That is the hook, 'tis called Manaiakalani.
When the hook catches land 'twill bring the old seas together,
Bring hither the large Alae (a bird) of Hina,
The sister bird
Of the great fiery showers caused by Maui.
He is the great magician that caught
By the mouth and fins Pimoe,
The royal fish that raise commotion in the sea.
Pimoe was wooed and won by the Ina of Maui.
But pity sprang for Mahanauluehu,
The children of Pimoe.
They were taken ashore, eaten by Maui, all but the fins.
So Pimoe was saved by the fins.
Mahanauluehu was saved by the tail.
Hinakeka was abducted by Peapea (the bat),
The great god of the bats.
So showers in plenty were sent by Mani,
Which scratched the eyes of Peapea with eight eyes.
They fought a battle with Moemoe.
Maui became restless and fought the sun
For the noose that Maui laid.
And Winter (Makalii--Maori = or *Matariki*) won the sun,
So summer was won by Maui.
They drank of the yellow waters to the dregs
Of Kane and Kanaloa.
By strategy the war
Embraced Hawaii, encompassed Maui (the island of Maui),
Kanai, around Oahu.
At Kahaluu was the after-birth, at Waikane the navel

It dropped at Hakipuu, at Kualoa.
For this is Maui of the malo,
Yes! of the land."

We may notice that though in Maori legend Taranga is the mother of Maui, in the above poem Akalana (A-Taranga) is the hero's father as given in the pedigree part, but is spoken of as Kalana (Taranga) further on, "that the malo of Kalana was his father." We are told by the Maoris that Mahuika, the Fire Goddess, was Maui's ancestress, but in the poem that Mahuie, who is a fire goddess, was the mother of Maui's mother—Hina-of-the-Fire. When Hina conceived she did so as a virgin; "I have no husband, yet a child is born." This adds one more to the divinities (for Maui is a god as well as hero) who in ancient religions have been virgin-born. I venture to disagree with the translation of the line presented as "by fire brought to life a fowl." The original in King Kalakaua's version reads:—

Hookauhua Hina, a keahi hanau he moa,
and this would certainly mean what is rendered by H.M. Liliuokalani as:

"Hina was pregnant and by fire brought to life a fowl"; but there is almost evidently a mistake in the printing of the original and the insertion of the comma. The line I respectfully submit should read:

Hookauhua Hinaakeahi hanau he moa.

"Hina-of-the-Fire was pregnant and brought forth a fowl."

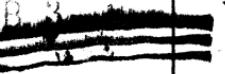
That Maui was brought forth as an egg, is as I have before remarked, mythologically correct, because he and his sister (Hinauri, *i.e.*, Hina the Dark) were Twins of Day and Night, always, like Castor and Pollux the Dioscuri, born from an egg. In Maori tradition, Maui was not an egg but an immature birth, and his Maori name Maui-Tikitiki—"Maui of the Head-dress or Topknot" (because wrapt in his mother's hair before he was thrown into the sea to be matured by the sea-gods)—may be compared with the Hawaiian name "Maui of the Malo," because born from the Malo of Taranga. The allusion to Peapea (Maori Pekapeka) the god of the bats, who had eight eyes, is paralleled by the knowledge that in Mangareva Maui himself is known as M^aui-matavaru that is "Maui the eight-eyed."

The last Era, the sixteenth, brings us down through the long pedigree to the present day, but shows us what our New Zealand genealogies fail to do, viz., that on the Maui line itself come many famous persons well-known to us, such as Kaitangata, Hema, Tawhaki, Wahieroa, Rata, Ruanuku, &c.

I now leave this poem for the present, in the hope that Hawaiian scholars will tell us more about it, and with deep gratitude for a translation that has made a unique Polynesian poem available for consideration by European students of mythology and folk-lore.

~~230 MAY 23~~

**THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
GRADUATE LIBRARY**

SERIAL	DATE DUE
	
ONE WEEK	
FEB 3 	
FER 18 1974	

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

3 9015 02795 1311

Replaced with Commercial Microform

BOOK CARD
DO NOT REMOVE

A Charge will be made
if this card is mutilated

or not returned
with the book

GRADUATE LIBRARY
THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

GL



DO NOT REMOVE
OR
MUTILATE CARD

